

Media Release

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Holistic approach to managing waterway health of the Parramatta River

The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) welcomes the NSW Government's focus on monitoring the health of our waterways.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's release of an ecological health report card for the Parramatta River and other estuaries across the state provides valuable information on certain aspects of waterway health.

The report card focuses on key stressors to water quality such as nutrients and sediment. These substances can stimulate algal blooms and increase turbidity which affect the health of vital habitats such as seagrasses, harm marine life and potentially cause human illness.

While this data is useful in understanding the overall ecological health of the river, other indicators, including the presence of enterococci, are used to determine the recreational health of waterways.

To support the PRCG's Masterplan to open new swim sites in the Parramatta River over the next few years, monitoring programs have been established to assess recreational water quality in the river.

The Monitoring Program measures trends in a suite of physical, chemical and microbial parameters for recreational health at existing and planned swimming sites in the River.

Frequent site monitoring began at three priority swimming sites – Putney, Bayview and McIlwaine Parks in mid-2019, with monitoring commencing at an additional site in Bedlam Bay in mid-2020. Initial results indicate that all four new sites meet the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines for swimming during dry weather, most of the time.

PRCG Coordinator, Nell Graham, said that the Parramatta River Masterplan takes a holistic approach to managing the health of the river.

"Each of the Masterplan steps address different aspects of ecological and waterway health, including riparian protection, biodiversity, litter prevention and community engagement," Ms Graham said.

"We are also working with councils and state government agencies to improve stormwater and sewer management and improve land-use planning."

"Through these initiatives we hope to deliver a world-class river for the community to enjoy for years to come."

For more information on the Parramatta River Masterplan, visit: ourlivingriver.com.au/masterplan

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